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ABSTRACT

This report highlights the findings of the 2001 National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign Summit. Because the campaigns entire strategy acknowledges the power and influence of the media on Americas youth, it is important and appropriate for the initiative to help young people develop their critical thinking skills by further investigating media literacy. Specifically, a media literacy approach can benefit drug prevention efforts by teaching youth to recognize how media messages influence them; to develop critical thinking; and to foster healthy self-esteem. A media literacy approach to illicit drug abuse prevention should incorporate a constellation of best practices recognized by the media literacy field. Because there are few examples of comprehensive drug prevention programs tied to media literacy skills, it is important to sketch out possible areas for future growth. To this end, three hypothetical examples are presented to help visualize the value of teaching media literacy and drug prevention in a variety of settings: parent-focused, faith-based settings, and evaluation of the Internet. The future of media literacy specific to drug prevention will hinge upon efforts to support educators and practitioners, educate decision-makers and invest in meaningful research. These key ideas include support for practitioners, educating key decision-makers, and investments in research. Contains a list of Web sites to consult for more information. (GCP)

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OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

MEDIA CAMPAIGN

NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN

HELPING YOUTH NAVIGATE THE MEDIA AGE: A NEW APPROACH TO DRUG PREVENTION

FINDINGS OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN MEDIA LITERACY SUMMIT WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE CENTER JUNE 01, 2001

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THE NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN
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WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN
MEDIA LITERACY SUMMIT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 1, 2001, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign hosted 15 experts in the fields of media literacy, substance abuse prevention and adolescent development at a one-day Media Literacy Summit in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the Summit was to explore the topic of media literacy specific to illicit drugs and to identify challenges and opportunities to advance this approach.

Since launching in 1998, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has made substantial contributions toward educating and enabling America's youth to reject illicit drugs, as well as alcohol and tobacco. This has included heavy purchase of advertising media, development of a variety of media-based tools for educators and community groups and outreach to the creators of media most heavily consumed by America's teens.

Because the Campaign's entire strategy acknowledges the power and influence of the media on America's youth, it is important and appropriate for the initiative to help young people develop their critical thinking skills by further investing in media literacy.

Media Literacy and Substance Abuse Prevention

Media literacy helps children and adolescents gain skills to intelligently navigate the media and filter the hundreds of messages they receive every day. Simply put, media literacy is the ability to "ask questions about what you watch, see and read." Media literacy can help youth understand how media are developed, the approaches used to increase persuasion, the commercial sources and beneficiaries of advertising and the ideology of messages contained in commercial and news media.[1]

Specifically, a media literacy approach can benefit drug prevention efforts by teaching youth:

- **To recognize how media messages influence them**. Students can internalize the skills they need to protect themselves against messages about drugs or unhealthy lifestyle choices.
- **To develop critical thinking**. When youth learn to analyze media, they can uncover the values messages about drugs embedded in media and decide whether to accept or reject those messages.
- **To foster healthy self-esteem**. Students skilled and knowledgeable about the media and their techniques can use media to creatively produce messages of their own. Encouraging healthy self-esteem is one goal of an effective drug prevention program.[2]

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[1] Simons-Morton, Donohew and Crump, "Health Communication in the Prevention of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use," *Health Education & Behavior* 24 (1997): 544-554, as cited in "Media Approaches to Prevent Substance Abuse," unpublished, PEPS Series, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, December 1997.

[2] Stephanie Doba and Ellen Doukoullos, *Media Literacy for Drug Prevention*, A Unit for Middle School Educators, *New York Times* Newspaper in Education program, no date, 2.

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Best Practices and Barriers

A media literacy approach to illicit drug abuse prevention should incorporate a constellation of best practices recognized by the media literacy field. In addition, there are a number of practical challenges that must be acknowledged by those working to bring this approach to the classroom and other settings.

Examples of best practices include:

- Acknowledge the pleasure in media use
- Be familiar with youth media and culture
- Treat kids as decision makers
- Start at an early age
- Use hands-on media production
- Use age-appropriate messages and activities

Examples of barriers include:

- The negative influencers are less visible
- Greater denial factor about drug use
- Practical challenges, such as using media clips with adult content
- The "boomerang" or unintended consequences effect (e.g. talking about drugs elevates visibility)
- Irregular depiction of illicit drugs in some media

Imagining the Possibilities

Because there are few examples of comprehensive drug prevention programs tied to media literacy skills, it is important to sketch out possible areas for future growth. To this end, three hypothetical examples are presented to help visualize the value of teaching media literacy and drug prevention in a variety of settings:

- **Parent-focused**: The first approach demonstrates an initiative that promotes parent-child communication to develop critical thinking skills in order to help children make healthy lifestyle decisions.

- **Faith-based settings**: The second approach identifies opportunities in faith-based programs for exposing middle-school children to media literacy and drug prevention education.

- **Evaluating the Internet**: The third explores how programs can help youth analyze the quality of information they receive from the diverse messages available via the Internet.

Conclusions

The future of media literacy specific to drug prevention will hinge upon efforts to support educators and practitioners, educate decision-makers and invest in meaningful research. These key ideas include:

- **Support for practitioners** should include providing access to appropriate curriculum development materials as well as sustained training and leadership development opportunities.

- **Educating key decision-makers** such as educational leaders, school administrators and state and federal officials is necessary to generate support and resources for the development of new ideas and approaches to drug prevention education.

- **Investments in research** are needed to examine how to improve the efficacy of media literacy interventions and how skills developed as a result of media literacy education affect young people's choices concerning illicit drugs and other risky behaviors.

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INTRODUCTION

On June 1, 2001, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign hosted 15 experts in the fields of media literacy, substance abuse prevention and adolescent development at a one-day Media Literacy Summit in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the Summit was to explore the topic of media literacy specific to illicit drugs and to identify challenges and opportunities to advance this approach.

While there are a number of media literacy programs geared toward alcohol and tobacco prevention, there are very few dealing explicitly with illicit drugs. The Summit was an effort by the Media Campaign to seed future growth of the substance abuse prevention field by bringing a group of experts together to generate their best thinking on a number of key issues.

Experts were recruited and charged with the task of: 1) reviewing best practices and relevant knowledge in the media literacy field; 2) identifying unique instructional opportunities and challenges to the development of illicit drug-focused media literacy programs; and 3) imagining future needs for the field, including support to expand the skills of practitioners, to communicate with key supporters and to advance theoretical and applied research.

This report reflects the discussion among attendees at the Media Literacy Summit on June 1. It was developed with considerable input from the Summit's co-facilitators, Robert Denniston, Deputy Director for Partnerships, National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and Dr. Renee Hobbs, Professor and Director of the Media Literacy Project, Babson College.

Media Literacy and the Media Campaign

Since launching in 1998, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has made substantial contributions toward educating and enabling America's youth to reject illicit drugs, as well as alcohol and tobacco. This has included heavy purchase of advertising media, development of a variety of media-based tools for educators and community groups and outreach to the creators of media most heavily consumed by America's teens.

Nearly a year of research went into the design of the Campaign. Experts were consulted in the fields of behavior change, youth development, drug abuse prevention, teen marketing, advertising and communications. Representatives from professional, civic and community organizations also provided input. Their recommendations and findings resulted in a comprehensive communication strategy that uses a variety of media and messages to reach young people, their parents and other youth-influential adults.

The goal of the Campaign is to educate and enable America's youth to reject illicit drugs, especially marijuana and inhalants. Drug use prevention messages are delivered to youth ages 9 to 18, with an emphasis on middle-school aged adolescents (approximately 11-13 years of age), as the transition from elementary to middle school marks a major increase in the rate of drug use initiation.

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Youth communications objectives include:

- Instill the belief that most young people do not use drugs, to counter the fact that adolescents consistently overestimate the prevalence of drug use among their peers.
- Enhance perceptions that using drugs is likely to lead to a variety of negatively valued consequences.
- Enhance perceptions that a drug-free lifestyle is more likely to lead to a variety of positively valued consequences.
- Enhance personal and social skills that promote positive lifestyle choices and resistance to drug use, including interpersonal and coping skills.
- Reinforce positive uses of time, helping youth identify productive alternatives to drug use.

The Campaign's messages have become ever-present in the lives of America's youth and their parents. From network television advertisements to school-based educational materials, from playground basketball backboards to Internet Web sites, and from parenting skills brochures to ads in movie theaters, the Campaign's messages reach Americans where they live, learn, work, play and practice their faith.

The Campaign has made substantial investments in leveraging the influence of media to educate America's youth and to counter pro-use messages delivered by popular media. The Campaign also has taken steps toward helping youth interpret media and the messages they receive about drugs, supporting the development of "Media Literacy for Drug Prevention," a curriculum for middle school teachers produced by *The New York Times* Newspaper in Education Program. However, because the Campaign's entire strategy acknowledges the power and influence of the media on America's youth, it is important and appropriate for the Campaign to help young people develop their critical thinking skills by further investing in media literacy.

WHY MEDIA LITERACY?

Media are omnipresent in the lives of American youth. According to Roberts et al.[3] children spend an average of 6 hours, 32 minutes each day with combined various media. Children spend about 28 hours per week watching television, twice as much time as they spend in school over the course of a year.[4] Sixty-six percent of 8- to 18-year-olds have television sets in their bedroom.[5] American teenagers listen to an estimated 10,500 hours of rock music between the 7th and 12th grades – just 500 fewer hours than they spend in school over 12 years.[6] And 72 percent of youth ages 8 to 17 use the Internet from home at least every few days.[7]

Despite recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and other health advocates that parents closely monitor their child's media consumption, research shows that many parents

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[3] D.F. Roberts, U.G. Foehr, V.J. Rideout, and M. Brodie, "Kids and the Media at the New Millennium: A Comprehensive National Analysis of Children's Media Use." Menlo Park, CA: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation Report, 1999.

[4] "Facts About Media Violence," American Medical Association, 1996, as cited in "Popular Culture & the American Child," 1999. Issue briefs, Studio City, CA. Mediascope Press.

[5] L. Goodstein and M. Connelly, "Teen-age Poll Finds Support for Tradition," *New York Times*, 30 April, 1998.

[6] *Entertainment Monitor*, December 1995, as cited in "Popular Culture & the American Child."

[7] Joseph Turow and Lilach Ner, "The Internet and the Family 2000: The View from Kids," Report Series Annenberg Public Policy Center, The University of Pennsylvania, 2000.

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do not see their child's media use habits as an issue of concern. A YMCA poll found that while 85 percent of parents say they frequently monitor what their kids watch on television, 61 percent of children say they are watching television without any parental supervision. Moreover, 71 percent of parents assert that they frequently monitor their child's use of the Web. However, 45 percent of teens say they surf the Internet "all the time/often" without a watchful parental eye.[8] In addition, 26 percent of parents worry they aren't able to explore the Web with their children as well as other parents do.[9]

Media literacy helps children and adolescents gain skills to intelligently navigate the media and filter the hundreds of messages they receive every day. Simply put, media literacy is the ability to "ask questions about what you watch, see and read." Media literacy can help youth understand how media are developed, the approaches used to increase persuasion, the commercial sources and beneficiaries of advertising and the ideology of messages contained in commercial and news media.[10]

In addition to providing youth with "protective" skills against the negative influences of the media, media literacy may equally offer young people positive "preparatory" skills for responsible citizenship. For example, media literacy can empower youth to be positive contributors to society, to challenge cynicism and apathy and to serve as agents of social change.

Four key concepts central to media literacy are that all media are constructed, have codes and conventions, convey value messages and have commercial interests.[11] A media literacy approach is likely to link these concepts to one or more of the following activities:[12]

- Critically analyzing media messages.
- Evaluating the source of the information.
- Discussing issues of bias and credibility.
- Raising awareness about how media techniques such as color, sound, editing or symbolism influence people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.
- Producing messages using different forms of media.

MEDIA LITERACY AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

Every day youth are bombarded with media messages about harmful substances such as alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs in news media, advertising, music lyrics, movies, television programming and on the Internet. A recent evaluation of television series popular with teens found that illicit drugs were mentioned or seen in 20 percent of all episodes, with tobacco in 22 percent and alcohol in 77 percent.[13] Another study showed that illicit drugs are represented in 22

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[8] "Talking with Teens," YMCA Parent and Teen Survey, Global Strategy Group, Inc., April 2000.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Simons-Morton, Donohew and Crump, "Health Communication in the Prevention of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use," *Health Education & Behavior* 24 (1997): 544-554, as cited in "Media Approaches to Prevent Substance Abuse," unpublished, PEPS Series, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, December 1997.
[11] Stephanie Doba and Ellen Doukoullos, *Media Literacy for Drug Prevention, A Unit for Middle School Educators*, New York Times Newspaper in Education program, no date, 5.
[12] Robert Kubey, "Setting Research Directions for Media and Health Education (draft)," April 2000, 9.
[13] "Substance Use in Popular Prime Time Television," sponsored by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and Mediascope Macro International, 2000, 1.

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percent of movies and 18 percent of songs.[14] The story is similar for media targeting much younger audiences. A study of 81 G-rated animated features from 1937 to 2000 found nearly 50 percent showed characters using alcohol or tobacco, often without depicting the negative consequences.[15]

Many of the messages about alcohol, tobacco or drugs in the media are presented in an appealing or favorable way. There are often pro-drug messages in the lyrics of popular music, humorous references to drug use and getting high in television comedy shows, and even in the "altered states" that are sometimes shown in the process of selling soft drinks, sneakers, automobiles or snack products. These messages can reinforce a belief that drug use is harmless fun.[16]

By teaching critical thinking skills, media literacy can help children and adolescents interpret and evaluate the media and the messages they receive about drugs. As youth learn to identify the strategies and techniques of creating and manipulating media messages, they are better able to recognize how and why messages appeal to them and the impact of these messages on their own behavior. The process of stepping back and thinking critically about a message provides in itself what is called an "inoculation effect" from the influence of that message.

The ONDCP Media Campaign's own communications strategy acknowledges the important role of media literacy in prevention: "Media presence of drug use is a powerful influence on adolescents, particularly because they do not recognize popular culture as an influence. Therefore, inculcating critical viewing skills and a sensitivity to the distorted images presented by popular culture is important for building resistance skills."[17]

Benefits of a Media Literacy Approach

Specifically, a media literacy approach can benefit drug prevention efforts by teaching youth:[18]

- **To recognize how media messages influence them.**
  Students who learn the vocabulary of the media can recognize persuasive or manipulative techniques in media. They then internalize the skills they need to protect themselves against messages about drugs or negative lifestyle choices that are embedded in the media around them.

- **To develop critical thinking.**
  When youth learn to critically analyze media, they can uncover the values messages embedded in them and decide whether to accept or reject those messages. When students learn to evaluate messages for accuracy and reliability, they have better information and tools to make more confident decisions to avoid substance abuse.

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[14] "Substance Use in Popular Movies and Music," sponsored by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Department of Health and Human Services/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999.

[15] Kimberley Thompson and Fumie Yokota, "Depiction of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Substances in G-Rated Animated Feature Films," *Pediatrics* 107: 1369-1374.

[16] Renee Hobbs, "A Media Literacy Approach to Developing an Anti-Drug PSA Campaign," STAND Project, 1997, 2.

[17] *The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign Communications Strategy Statement*, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, 1998, 33.

[18] Doba and Doukoullos, 2.

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- **To foster healthy self-esteem.**
  Students who are skilled and knowledgeable about the media and their techniques can, within the context of a drug prevention program, use media creatively to produce satisfying and constructive messages of their own. They also can influence their peers to make positive choices about drug use. Encouraging healthy self-esteem and relationships is one of the goals of an effective drug prevention program.

Opportunities and Challenges

Among those who are responsible for health education in the classroom and other settings, there is a relatively high level of awareness and understanding of teaching how to critically analyze media representations of alcohol and tobacco. This is in part due to ubiquitous advertising and promotion of these products. Conversely, many experts indicate that there is not only a lack of activity in media literacy education specific to illicit drugs, but there are also some substantial barriers to teaching this discipline. Identifying the opportunities to leverage what works and understanding the challenges specific to illicit drugs are necessary to provide the clarity that will help grow this approach.

In general, research on media literacy programs specific to alcohol and tobacco shows that these interventions can have an effect on characteristics thought to be protective factors against substance abuse. For instance, a media literacy program focused on alcohol and tobacco advertising for middle school students can improve knowledge, diminish perceptions of normative alcohol and tobacco use, increase attitudes critical of alcohol and tobacco industry advertising techniques and decrease intentions to drink alcohol over the short term.[19] Another study shows that an intervention may have immediate effects on attitudes about alcohol and tobacco and a more powerful impact over time.[20]

Best Practices

An increasing number of educators and health professionals have adopted a media literacy approach to health education, including substance abuse and violence prevention. For example, from 1995 to 2000, health educators grew from less than 5 percent to more than 17 percent of the attendees at the National Media Education Conference. Among these educators, there is growing recognition of a constellation of "best practices" that increases the effectiveness of work with children and youth in relation to media issues. Among those discussed at the Summit were:

- **Do not talk down to kids.** Media literacy is most effectively taught when teachers respect the intelligence of youth and use a co-learning approach. The growing emphasis on technology in the classroom has helped change the role of teachers from being a "sage on the stage" to a "guide on the side" in media literacy instruction.
- **Acknowledge the pleasure in media use.** Youth culture is closely identified with media and pop culture. When young people's experience and familiarity with media culture is acknowledged and validated, media literacy skills are more likely to be accepted and applied to the messages they consume daily.

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[19] J.W. Graham and R. Hernandez, "A Pilot Test of the AdSmarts Curriculum: A Report to the Scott Newman Center," Los Angeles CA, 1993. M.E. Goldberg and L.J Bechtel, "AdSmarts: An Intervention Invoking Reactance to Compact Alcohol Usage by Youths," Pennsylvania State University, unpublished paper, both as cited in "Media Approaches to Prevent Substance Abuse," 3-57.

[20] E.W. Austin and K.K. Johnson, "Effects of General and Alcohol-Specific Media Literacy Training on Children's Decision Making about Alcohol," *Journal of Health Communication*, as cited in "Media Approaches to Prevent Substance Abuse," 3-58.

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- **Use hands-on production.** Media production and the opportunity to create their own media messages are powerful ways to help internalize skills. Media literacy techniques can be embedded within programs designed to teach youth how to create their own substance abuse prevention messages and gain positive recognition from peers.[21] The high-tech aspect of media production is particularly engaging for adolescents and can be a hook to get them meaningfully involved in prevention programs.
- **Start early.** Children are exposed to media at a very young age. Early interventions can improve children's understanding of persuasive intent, reduce expectations of positive consequences of drinking and decrease the likelihood of their choosing an alcohol-related product, such as a t-shirt or cap with a beer logo.[22]
- **Be familiar with youth media and culture.** Practitioners gain credibility when they are fluent in youth pop culture and able to use current examples from contemporary media. They lose credibility with outdated examples of media messages no longer familiar or relevant to youth.
- **Treat kids as decision makers.** Young people should be recognized as active participants in the construction of their own values and beliefs, not as vulnerable dupes who are victimized by powerful media images.
- **Don't "bash" the media.** Acknowledge that the media are a powerful and amazing influence that can be used for positive and healthy ends. Media literate people more fully appreciate media's complexity, creativity and potential. They do not blame the media for society's problems.
- **Acknowledge context.** Young people will be exposed to different messages as a result of their geographic environment, socio-economic class, race and culture. Not all young people are influenced by media messages in the same way.
- **Use age appropriate messages and activities.** Practitioners run the risk of alienating youth when complex issues about media or substance abuse are oversimplified for older teens. Conversely, avoid complex, developmentally inappropriate material for younger teens.
- **Engage parents.** Parents need to be motivated to actively monitor their child's media consumption and engage in a continuing dialogue about media messages. Parents should monitor not only television viewing, but online activity, music and movies.
- **Involve primary faculty.** Too often, media literacy is considered a peripheral subject in school curricula. When possible, media literacy should be developed as a core, discrete discipline taught by primary school faculty.

Barriers

While a media literacy approach holds great potential as part of an overall illicit drug prevention strategy, there are a number of practical challenges that must be acknowledged by those developing curricula and delivering media literacy messages in the classroom. These barriers include:

- **Who are the negative influencers?** Alcohol and tobacco advertisements and product placements are favored topics for media literacy education because there are easily identifiable corporate marketers that can be linked to the messages. With illicit drugs, it is much harder to identify a "manipulator" or ascribe motives to the media content youth may encounter.
- **Greater denial factor.** Illicit drugs are not as ubiquitous as tobacco and alcohol, and many parents and other adult-influencers do not believe all children are at risk. Many adults are not

[21] "Media Approaches to Prevent Substance Abuse," 3-57.
[22] Austin and Johnson.

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aware of the pro-drug messages in youth-oriented media because they do not attend the movies, watch the television or hear the music their children do. Media stereotypes of drug use lead educators in particular to deny the presence of drugs in the lives of their students. The reality of drug use defies all stereotypes, cutting across all geographic, socio-economic, racial and ethnic boundaries in American society.[23]

- **Irregular depiction**. Illicit drugs are not commonly depicted in television programming.[24] Although depictions in popular music include many positive references to altered states or suggest drug use as normal, these depictions seldom follow a predictable pattern.
- **Music and youth culture.** Most illicit drug representations are found in popular music and many youth are tremendously invested in that culture. It is harder to debunk these representations because youth identify with musicians and view them as more authentic than other media figures or celebrities.[25]
- **The "boomerang" effect.** Raising the issue of drugs in the context of media literacy elevates the visibility of drugs and may increase the perceived status of drug use among youth.
- **Practical challenges.** Teachers and other practitioners face limitations in teaching media literacy, particularly in classroom settings. Media examples from films or television cannot easily be packaged and distributed with training materials due to copyright issues. And, unlike alcohol, which can be found in abundance in advertising, it is often difficult for educators to find and capture their own examples on television or in movies. Even when such examples are identified, educators frequently cannot use clips from movies, television or music because of concerns about adult content.

IMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES

Research has determined that the audience most vulnerable to first time drug use is children aged 9 to 12 and young teens. However, media literacy concepts can be introduced at even younger ages to set up the type of critical thinking and analysis that will serve a child his or her entire life when it comes to making tough decisions, including those about drugs and other substances.

Because there are few examples of comprehensive drug prevention programs tied to media literacy skills, it is important to sketch out possible areas for future growth in the field. To this end, three hypothetical examples are presented to help visualize the value of teaching media literacy and drug prevention in a variety of settings. The first approach demonstrates an initiative that promotes parent-child communication to help children develop critical thinking skills and make healthy lifestyle decisions. The second approach identifies opportunities in faith-based programs for exposing middle-school children to media literacy and drug prevention education. The third explores how programs can help youth analyze the information they receive from the Internet.

Hypothetical Approach #1
Parent-Focused Approach to Media Literacy and Drug Prevention

Description

Today it is not uncommon for adults to associate high-risk or anti-social youth behaviors with negative influences from "the media." This topic has been the focus of numerous social and

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[23] *Media Campaign Communications Strategy Statement*, 12.
[24] "Substance Use in Popular Prime Time Television," 2.
[25] P. Christenson and D. Roberts, *It's Not Only Rock and Roll: Popular Music in the Lives of Adolescents* (New York: Hampton Press, 1995).

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policy debates and has resulted in advocacy for more parental monitoring of children's media habits and the development of new technologies such as the V-chip for televisions and computer filtering software that parents can use to restrict access to online content. These reactive measures are only a partial solution. They must be complemented with proactive media literacy education to make youth more capable of interpreting and reacting to the multitude of media messages they inevitably will continue to receive.

Fostering effective communication between parents and children is an essential component of drug abuse prevention, and yet most parents are not actively involved in monitoring their child's media consumption. With guidance and support, parents can instill skills in young children to help them to critically analyze messages on television, videos, the Internet and music.[26] Programs for parents could be implemented through existing parenting organizations, such as the National Parent Teacher Association or child care initiatives such as Head Start.

There are three goals of a parent-focused approach to media literacy and drug prevention: 1) to motivate parents to more closely monitor their child's consumption of media; 2) to help parents use discussions of media content to promote healthy communication patterns; and 3) to help protect children from the effects of problematic media portrayals of substance use. The basis for monitoring as a parental skill comes from the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign:

- Use anti-drug media messages as a catalyst for discussion and message reinforcement.
- Stay involved in and actively monitor the adolescent's activities.[27]

Rationale

This type of parent-focused media literacy program could extend across several age groups and development stages; however, it should begin early with children as young as two years and emphasize the importance of staying involved in children's media choices during the elementary school years. The American Academy of Pediatrics collected recent data from Nielsen Media Research, finding that the average child or adolescent watches an average of nearly three hours of television per day. This limits the time available for parent-child communication, including discussions about media.[28]

Needs Assessment

While parents have indicated that they have concerns about the influence of popular media on their children, evidence shows much inconsistency about parental monitoring of media use. For example, parents claim to set specific limits on media use, but their own children are less likely to be aware of these rules.[29] The success of the National Cable Television Association's "Family and Community Critical Viewing Skills Program," conducted in coordination with the National Parent Teacher Association, demonstrates that parents are open to guidance on how to impart media literacy skills to their children.[30] By the time children have grown to the early teens, parents' concerns increase dramatically. According to recent focus groups conducted by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign of parents of children ages 11-14, concerns included:

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[26] See "Media Guidelines for Parents," American Academy of Pediatrics, at www.medem.com/MedLB/article_detaillb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZGVL4PQ7C&sub_ca.

[27] *The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign Communication Strategy Statement*, 37.

[28] *Pediatrics* 107 (February 2001), citing 1998 Report on Television from Nielsen Media Research.

[29] R. Desmond, J. Singer, D. Singer, R. Calam and K. Colimore, "Family mediation patterns and television viewing," *Human Communication Research* 11: 461-480.

[30] See more on this project on the NCTA Web site at www.ncta.com/industry_initiatives.

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- Lack of control over what their children see on television.
- Violence in the media.
- Images of teenage life that are inconsistent with most parents' views and the potential effect of these images on their child.
- Access to uncensored and potentially inappropriate information in the media, especially the Internet. Some parents are uncertain whether their children are able to process this material while maintaining values their parents have worked to instill.
- The discrepancy between the values emphasized in the media and those of the family.
- Growing consumerism and an unhealthy focus on material objects such as clothes, cell phones and video games and the pressure among parents to give in to their child's demands so they are not "left out."[31]

An effective parent education initiative could explore these concerns, helping deliver to parents practical strategies to better manage the complexities of "growing up in an information age."

Target audience: The primary focus is on parents of children ages 6 to 11, the "post-Sesame Street" generation who are watching a larger percentage of adult programming, but with information about the needs of older and younger children as well.

Developmental concerns

Information that is presented to parents must help build an understanding of children's different perceptions and interpretations of media content as a result of their developmental levels. Children do not relate to the media in the same way as adults. At different stages of development, children see and understand media messages in different ways. For example:

- Preschoolers cannot always differentiate between fantasy characters and real people.[32]
- Children up to age 11 are more likely to imitate behaviors they see that are socially rewarded.
- Toddlers to five years begin to identify "good" and "bad" characters, but have difficulty sorting out complex traits, such as a "mean" character with redeeming qualities.[33]
- Young children are not skilled at distinguishing a television program from a commercial.
- Children ages six to eight may not see the relationship between an action at the beginning of a program and a consequence at the end.[34]
- Because of their limited life experience, six to eleven year-olds often believe that what they see in the media is a reflection of real life. Television characters can be role models. If a child's hero smokes or uses drugs, he or she may assume that practice is acceptable.
- Characters children look up to, including those who may use drugs or drink alcohol, may influence their lifestyle decisions.[35]

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[31] "A Report on Research Results from Parent Message Testing for the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign," Fleishman-Hillard Research, September 2001.

[32] M. Fitch, A. Huston and J. Wright, "From Television Forms to Genre Schemata: Children's Perceptions of Television Reality." In G. Berry and J. Asamen (Eds) *Children and Television* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993).

[33] C. Doubleday and K. Droege. "Cognitive Developmental Influences on Children's Understanding of Television." In G. Berry and J. Asamen (Eds) *Children and Television* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993).

[34] Collins, W.A. "Cognitive Processing in Television Viewing," In D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet and J. Lazar (Eds) *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implication for the Eighties*. Volume 2: Technical Reviews (pp. 9-23). Washington D.C. National Institutes on Mental Health.

[35] *Children, the Media and Drugs, A Parent's Guide*, Sponsored by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, 1999.

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Context
Parent education outreach could take many forms, including face-to-face community-based programs, public service announcements, content placement on Web sites targeted to parents and "advice" materials placed in parenting and women's magazines, afternoon television talk shows and radio talk programs.

Recommendations
Parent education materials must acknowledge the need to respect children as individuals and the importance of making decisions that work for all family members and using media consumption as opportunities, not obstacles, for family communication. To some degree, a parent education program can help in re-norming parental expectations regarding the appropriate level of responsibility over a child's media use habits. Age-appropriate activities should promote learning, growth and opportunities for parents to share their values with their children.

Ages 2-5:

- Explain the differences between television shows and television commercials.
- Introduce the basic concept of target audience: some shows are for grownups and some shows are for kids.
- Limit television viewing to one hour per day or less.
- Use videos for children's entertainment, not adult convenience.
- Display your emotional response to media messages you find disturbing, funny or interesting. Your children learn from your response to messages.
- Ask questions to help children distinguish between reality and fantasy: Could that really happen? Would that be funny if it happened to you?

Ages 6-8:

- Have a co-viewing focus: parents and child watch a show together and ask child to explain what is happening to assess the child's comprehension of message content.
- Have parents establish rules and limits with some input from children about time and content of media use, including videogames, television, videotapes and the Internet.
- Use a television guide or other planning tool to choose shows in advance to support the concept of "selective viewing."
- Examine "good guys" and "bad guys" to introduce media stereotypes.
- Discuss what makes an ad "attention getting" and introduce vocabulary words to build awareness of ads as media constructions: pacing, character, actor, slogan, jingle, repetition, humor and suspense.
- Point out the difference between medical drugs and other types of substances when prescription drug ads are viewed.
- Highlight situations where drugs are glamorized. If drugs or alcohol were used to avoid or solve problems, show your emotional response and point out other ways the character may have responded.

Ages 9-12:

- Adopt a co-viewing focus: parents and child watch a show together and child explains more about characters and situations in order to better understand child's emotional identification with characters. Parents ask: Which characters do you like best and why?

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- Justify choices: Children watch agreed-upon list of shows. Child can watch a new show of his/her choosing with good reasons for the selection, contingent upon parent approval.
- Have parents establish rules and limits with input from child: Exceptions and modifications to rules are negotiated between child and parent. Enforcement of rules is necessary to establish consequences for rule violation.
- Compare media image with reality in the child's day-to-day settings. For example, how do situations between young people, siblings and parents as depicted in a situation comedy compare and contrast to their own experience?
- Share your emotional reaction to media messages that depict altered states of consciousness through speeded up motion, sound effects or special visual effects. What does your child like and dislike about these effects?
- Discuss references to substance abuse in media and consequences for a character using these substances. Have children identify how substance use may affect relationships and economics.

Ages 13 - 18:

- Establish a co-viewing focus: Have parents and children watch a show together and child explains why peers like this show. Parents ask: What makes this show so popular?
- Co-viewing focus: discussions about plot and character should continue to explore the levels of realism depicted. What makes a character's behavior seem realistic or unrealistic?
- Ensure discussions of films begin to reflect a future-oriented approach. For example, how would substance use affect a character's future?
- Establish rules and limits as part of a communication process that emphasizes family values. Some media contain messages that violate family values and should not enter the home. Discussion of pornography, hate speech, obscenity, violence and drug use should explore differences and similarities between family members' beliefs and values.
- Discuss why people use media and the different pleasures and satisfactions of media use, from music on the car radio to surfing to afternoon soap operas.
- Create opportunities for a family discussion of the role of media in society. Ask: How does the teen perceive the influence of the media on younger children?

Hypothetical Approach #2
Media Literacy and Drug Prevention in Faith-Based Settings

Description

A media literacy approach to drug prevention will allow faith leaders to express anti-drug and other positive values to youth in a supportive, flexible educational environment. With non-denominational but faith-based content, educational materials could be adaptable to a range of religious settings such as churches, mosques, temples and other institutions. While this example focuses on children ages 11 to 13, age-appropriate material could be developed for younger children and teens.

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Rationale
Faith organizations are uniquely poised to address the problem of youth substance abuse. By offering supervised activities, positive role models and a moral framework for living, youth ministers are well positioned to give adolescents the spiritual guidance and tools they need to reject drugs. Moreover, parents and other adult caregivers frequently rely on faith communities for help in communicating their values and keeping young people safe.

In addition, media literacy is a fitting intervention for the faith setting because of the discipline's emphasis on values education. Media literate youth learn to "read" values that are embedded in media messages and discover the underlying points of view. Media literacy provides a structured framework in which faith leaders build reflective thinking that can support anti-drug messages in addition to an array of other values (e.g. anti-materialism, violence prevention, sexual responsibility) that reflect the tenets of their particular faith.

Faith-based organizations offer a number of advantages that make them well suited for teaching media literacy specific to substance abuse prevention. These include:

- **Adaptability**. Media literacy is a neutral tool upon which each faith can impose its particular values, providing youth leaders an adaptable framework for values education.
- **Broad reach**. Faith cuts across all gender, racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups. Faith has been identified as a particularly good way to deliver substance abuse prevention messages to certain minority audiences, including African Americans and Hispanics.
- **Mentoring.** Children typically respond best to media education when presented by mentors rather than authority figures. Faith youth leaders often fulfill the mentor role because they serve as spiritual advisors in addition to educators.
- **Student-centeredness.** Faith organizations offer the informal setting that enhances media literacy education. Youth leaders are able to discuss and teach media literacy in a collaborative, student-centered style.

Needs Assessment
According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), teens that attend religious services four times a month are 26 percent less likely to smoke marijuana than teens that do not attend such services.[36] Moreover, such teens are less likely to use other drugs, know drug dealers or have friends who smoke, drink or do drugs than teens who attend religious services less than once a month.

However, despite the positive role that faith communities play in the lives of youth, there may be more that some congregations can do to confront substance abuse. Most faith institutions have youth ministries and some have drug treatment programs; however, few incorporate significant substance abuse prevention activities in their youth ministries. A 1998 Urban Institute study found that out of 1,236 congregations surveyed, only two percent had substance abuse programs.[37]

Target audience: Children ages 11 to 13 who participate in some form of youth religious education program. Materials should be targeted to appeal to adult "gatekeepers" who decide on program content.

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[36] "Back to School Survey of Teens, Teachers and Principals," National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 1998.
[37] National Congregations Study, Urban Institute, 1998.

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Developmental concerns

- A media literacy emphasis can enhance the status of religious education programs by making them more relevant and appealing to youth.
- Opportunities for creative expression and performance sit well with this age group: children can design and create their own anti-drug public service announcements using poster paper and markers or video cameras and editing equipment. They can gain positive recognition that builds self-esteem by sharing them with their family members or displaying them publicly.

Context

The program material should include content that could be used by faith youth leaders with a wide variety of experience and training. The materials should be designed to be used flexibly in a range of settings, including after-school programs, Sunday school classes, confirmation or CCD courses, retreats, camps, overnight "lock-ins" and other youth activities. Content also could be incorporated into religious education programs, youth and adult sermon series, newsletters and other faith publications.

Recommendations

Faith leaders would be encouraged to customize the non-denominational curriculum to mirror their religious beliefs. The program would recommend a wide range of basic media literacy activities that are visually stimulating and include the use of technology when possible. Drug abuse prevention messages emphasize the idea of taking care of your body, being an independent thinker, using media in moderation, respecting yourself and others and avoiding harm to self and others.

The following recommended activities could provide meaningful opportunities for discussions of values in the context of contemporary life and would be appropriate for a religious education setting. Examples include:

- Have children analyze specific clips from television shows, music lyrics, movies or the Internet and evaluate underlying values and messages about sexual responsibility, materialism, social relationships and violence. How do the values of the media compare and contrast with those espoused by your faith? How do your own personal values compare to those presented in the media?

- Evaluate news media coverage, television programs, movies and Web sites with respect to how religion is depicted. How are particular religious faiths, biblical stories, etc. portrayed in the media? How do these portrayals compare to what children have experienced?

- Discuss substance abuse in the context of values. Compare and contrast children's beliefs and values with the underlying values in the pro-drug messages of contemporary pop and rap music. Discuss how glamorization of drugs (including alcohol and tobacco) occurs in different types of mass media. Discuss why most pro-drug use messages are found in popular music.

- Encourage parents to participate in media literacy education. Give parent and child a "homework" assignment to view and analyze a television program together. How do the characters' behaviors compare and contrast to the ideals of our faith?

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- Talk about the role of celebrities in pop culture. Some people say that celebrities are contemporary gods and goddesses. In what ways do people "worship" celebrities? In what ways is worship different from the attraction people feel towards celebrities?

- Use personal storytelling as the basis for student-produced media projects. Have youth create their own "coming of age" stories on video and use as a platform to discuss issues related to adolescence, such as challenges, value system development, etc.

- Have youth create PSAs or cartoons that promote anti-drug messages that build on the values of one's faith.

Hypothetical Approach #3
Evaluating Internet Web Sites

Description
In recent years, there has been a proliferation of pro-drug Web sites, chat rooms extolling the pleasures of drug culture and message boards that feature links to drug information from a variety of credible and less-credible sources. Through in-class activities and online interactive activities, students in grades 9 to 12 can learn how to evaluate the credibility of Web sites that depict conflicting information and to become more responsible when using the Internet. The efforts of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's Freevibe.com and TheAntiDrug.com have encouraged teens to critically analyze pro-drug Web sites. Teachers can incorporate critical analysis of Web site content into health education curricula to strengthen students' ability to evaluate information and opinions about drug use.

Rationale
Virtually anyone can place content on the Web in an unregulated, open manner. Therefore, the danger is quite high for a teen who is surfing without guidance or oversight to stumble across potentially harmful information on the Web. An assessment of drug-related Web sites found that "Thousands of Web sites and online forums facilitate and promote drug use. To a limited degree, one may purchase actual illegal drugs over the Internet. Perhaps more dangerous – and less easily monitored – are the messages presented by drug-related Web content. In the guise of objectivity, countless sources promote illegal drug use as fun, fashionable, and safe."[38]

Although the use of the Internet as part of home-based media has been exploding among teens, there has been relatively little exploration of how to help teens become critical thinkers about the quality and content of the messages accessible via the Internet.

Needs Assessment
There is one group of teens that are considered to be at special risk – so-called "sensation seekers." They are individuals who are thrill-seekers, looking for extra stimulation and activities that provide novelty and adventure. Because of this trait of being the first to try and experiment with new activities, these are the teens to be most concerned about regarding early drug use.[39]

One of the biggest struggles in the online world is not only the proliferation of drug information by webmasters or dealers, but online community support by chatters. Message board comments such as the one below are found throughout the Internet. This is the type of information a high-

[38] Schouten Schuler, ONDCP briefing on the prevalence of Internet-based drug content, July 2000.
[39] Personal communications, Ogilvy and Mather, Patricia Eitel, 05/23/2001.

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sensation seeking teen might well seek out. These comments by a message board poster on popular teen girl site, www.chickclick.com normalize drug use:

> ***swey60*** *wrote on 1/4/2001 12:58:10 AM RAVES ARE THE MOST AWESOME PLACES TO GO TO BECAUSE THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE THERE, GREAT MUSIC, AND BEST OF ALL EVERYONE IS ALWAYS ROLLIN *on Ecstasy*. THATS THE WAY TO DO IT RAVE AND ROLL.*

A recent ONDCP-sponsored review of online drug culture found that:[40]

- Drug use is being presented as a fun, fashionable and safe activity on the Internet.
- Prominent sites, such as the Lycaeum (www.lycaeum.com) or Hyperreal (www.hyperreal.com), have found their way to the top of search engine result lists for drug keywords.
- Web rings, or traffic sharing Web sites, allow thousands of point-of-entry links to drug culture, use and paraphernalia sites.
- The dissemination of information regarding drug use and manufacturing is rapidly growing.

Considerations

Among younger teens, there is an incongruity between the perception that teens have of themselves as skeptical consumers and their actual purchasing habits. That is, teens don't like the idea of marketers "targeting" them but at the same time represent one of the top purchasing demographics. Any media literacy interventions for this group should focus heavily on introducing concepts of targeting, branding and advertising.

Of special note, the high-risk subgroups such as the sensation seekers need a tailored intervention not generalizable to the population of general teens. Interventions should emphasize the commercialization of music and other media while acknowledging the cultural realities of this age group (i.e., music and the Internet sites they love *belong* to them and their generation). Substance-abuse specific media literacy interventions can generate discussions about such questions as, "Why would someone put this information on the Internet?"; "What do they have to gain by showing it to you?"; and "What clues suggest that the author of this message is a trustworthy (or untrustworthy) source?"

Target audience: Teens aged 14 to 18 who explore a range of Internet content and can benefit from the skills of making evaluative discriminations between messages of widely differing format, content and quality. This target audience can be reached through both in-school settings with health education and computer technology teachers and via Web sites popular with youth.

Developmental concerns

- During the high school years, adolescents try on various identities by sub-cultural group identification. Belonging to a group can lead to pressures to adopt certain beliefs and attitudes that conflict with family values and be inconsistent with reasoning and analysis skills.

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[40] Schuler.

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- Patterns of media use become habitual and routine, especially for the purposes of social interaction, sexual arousal, fantasy/daydreaming and escape.

- Mood management becomes a special focus for adolescents who often use music, videogames, TV viewing or the Internet to channel, interpret or mask their complex feelings and emotions.[41]

Context

Classroom settings for media literacy interventions related to the Internet could be integrated into a number of disciplines, including language arts, health education, social studies or technology courses. Other settings may include community after-school programs of youth-serving organizations such as Power-Up Centers or the YMCA, faith-based education, summer camps, etc.

Recommendations

There are a number of intervention activities to teach the teen audience to evaluate information on drugs as they receive it on the Internet. Curriculum materials would include a list of pre-screened sites that educators could preview in advance to ensure that students would not be exposed to unhealthy pro-drug information presented in an appealing way. Key messages for this audience include:

- There is no such thing as a message without a point of view.
- Some chat rooms and message boards have posted factually incorrect information about drugs. People may knowingly or unknowingly post or link to incorrect information on these sites/rooms.
- You can make better decisions with an informed analysis of who is sending messages and what that person's motive or purpose is.
- Some content about drugs on the Web is created by people who want to sell drug paraphernalia or make money from drug sales.
- Some people send positive messages about drugs because they have serious problems and they're trying to rationalize their bad decisions.
- Some people send positive messages about drugs because they're trying on an "image" that they think will be attractive or "cool." Or, they're not aware of or don't care about the negative consequences of using drugs. Some may be addicted to drugs.
- Some Web sites look really flashy but are made by people without any background or professional expertise: you need to really look carefully at the content (not just format) to assess whether a Web site is credible.
- Discuss: Does the point of view presented on this site seem credible? What techniques are used to make the site seem more credible and believable? How do you tell if the information is accurate or not?

Examples of specific activities may include:

- Find strategies for identifying the "author" of Web sites or chat room messages.
- Compare and contrast two different points of view about marijuana. Find sites that celebrate marijuana and sites that condemn it. How is the author's point of view evident? What is motivating the author to create this Web site?

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[41] Christenson and Roberts.

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- Provide one or two key facts and myths (e.g., rumors, incomplete story about a drug's health consequences) about illegal drug use and invite students to see how frequently these are presented on Internet Web sites. Which is more common, the fact or the myth?
- Find examples of celebrities and fictional characters who have taken drugs. What were the consequences?
- Develop a drug simulation game created by youth that highlights the risks and negative effects of drug use on all aspects of their lives.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Asked to imagine the future of media literacy specific to drug prevention, experts respond that the success of the field will hinge upon efforts to 1) support educators and practitioners; 2) educate decision-makers; and 3) invest in meaningful research.

Supporting Practitioners

Support for practitioners should include providing access to appropriate curriculum development materials as well as sustained training and leadership development opportunities. Specific ideas include:

- Develop illicit drug-specific curricula or lesson plans focused on the Internet and music to complement existing materials. Make these available to educators on the Internet.
- Conduct an assessment of health educators currently using media literacy curricula to develop goals for drug prevention-specific materials that would be most useful to educators.
- Identify the most widely used and effective tobacco and alcohol media literacy curricula and incorporate an illicit drug component in new editions.
- Incorporate media literacy concepts into proven drug prevention curricula, such as "Project Alert" or "Life Skills."
- Provide media literacy materials to publishers of home-schooling curricula.
- Create an online portal to give practitioners easy access to quality media literacy curricula and lesson plans specific to illicit drugs.
- Provide educators with possible sources of media equipment and funding to support media production programs. Develop venues such as a Web site to showcase youth media projects.
- Develop leadership in the field by hosting a series of intensive regional media literacy training institutes for teachers that provide academic credit.

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Educating Decision-Makers

Key decision-makers are those educational leaders, school administrators, state and federal officials who provide support and resources for the development of new ideas and approaches to drug prevention education. These individuals will be critical to growing the field and expanding the application of media literacy in both classroom and non-traditional venues. Specific ideas to generate support among these individuals include:

- Solicit endorsement of media literacy curriculum materials by State departments of education.
- Tailor media literacy programs to support State education curriculum guidelines.
- Host seminars on media literacy as a substance abuse prevention tool at national prevention conferences.
- Collaborate with relevant federal agencies on opportunities to promote media literacy.
- Reach out to specific communities primed for involvement in media literacy specific to illicit drugs, such as the faith and juvenile justice communities.
- Suggestions for faith community outreach:
    - Identify criteria for formal incorporation of media literacy content into faith education programs.
    - Provide media literacy curriculum training to youth and adult leaders at conferences of national faith organizations.
    - Distribute media literacy content to publishers of faith materials (Sunday School curricula, study guides, etc.).
    - Urge seminaries, divinity schools and other institutions that educate clergy and youth workers to include training in substance abuse prevention and media literacy in required coursework.
    - Establish grants and fellowships to provide religious youth workers and clergy with additional training in media literacy and substance abuse prevention.
    - Host national or regional interfaith town-hall meetings to explore opportunities for media literacy.
- Suggestions for juvenile justice community outreach:
    - Educate and train staff in juvenile justice settings to use media literacy interventions in youth education and life skills programs.
    - Conduct focus groups with corrections officers to explore the use of media in youth detention centers.
    - Integrate media literacy and illicit drug prevention into successful rehabilitation programs, including substance abuse treatment aftercare programs.

Investing in Research

Finally, there is a great need for research to examine how to improve the efficacy of media literacy interventions and how skills developed as a result of media literacy education affect young people's choices concerning illicit drugs and other risky behaviors. Specific research priorities should include:

- A longitudinal field-based evaluation to assess the impact of media literacy education on health behaviors.

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- Case study data that documents program implementation and strategies for sustaining programs over time.

- Improved approaches to measure how media production activities and opportunities for creative self-expression affect resilience among at-risk youth.

- Better developmental evidence on how knowledge and attitudes about drug use, emotions, life experiences and cognitive reasoning skills like media literacy interact to produce behavior change.

- Formative research of pilot-tested curricula to determine the impact of staff development training on the use and success of media literacy programs.

No matter how many anti-drug messages our nation's youth receive, the exponential growth of the information age creates a situation where knowledge and persuasive communication are no longer adequate by themselves. Young people need skills and strategies for evaluating information from multiple sources and making good decisions. One important dimension of maintaining a healthy, drug-free lifestyle may hinge on the ability to "ask questions about what they watch, see and read." Media literacy represents a promising practice in the prevention "toolkit," one that offers opportunities that may help young people resist the negative messages that glamorize risk-taking, immediate gratification and the instant mood change that so pervade our cultural environment today.

Thinking critically about media messages that promote destructive relationships, aggression and violence, drug use and inappropriate sexual behavior can help young people discover and gain control over their own perceptions and interpretations. In the end, this may be the most powerful "anti-drug" of all.

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You may download a copy of this paper at www.mediacampaign.org.
For more information about The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's *National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign* and our drug prevention resources, please visit our Web sites listed below.

- **TheAntiDrug.com** (www.TheAntiDrug.com) provides parents and other adult caregivers with strategies and tips on raising healthy, drug-free children. This award-winning site encourages parents to help their children with these difficult issues by offering information from behavioral experts as well as other parents. It also offers suggestions on how to address sensitive subjects such as a parent's personal history with drugs. Information from TheAntiDrug.com is now available in Spanish at www.laantidroga.com and in various Asian languages (Korean, Cambodian, Chinese and Vietnamese) through the homepage. The site also offers an opt-in parenting tips e-mail service.

- **Freevibe** (www.freevibe.com) helps young people understand the dangers of substance abuse and make responsible decisions with their lives. The site features moderated bulletin boards, role-playing games, media literacy tools, pop culture news and facts about today's drugs. The site also engages visitors to submit their own "Anti-Drugs." The Media Campaign maintains Freevibe with support from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information.

- **Teachers Guide** (www.teachersguide.org) provides teachers with ideas for incorporating drug prevention messages into their lesson plans, classroom activities, teaching tips and discussion guides to help deter students from using or trying drugs. It was created and designed with input from veteran educators, behavioral experts, and social marketers.

- **MediaCampaign.org** (www.mediacampaign.org) provides Campaign stakeholders with information about the ONDCP's drug prevention programs, activities and strategies. The site includes the Campaign's press releases, announcements and quarterly newsletter, as well as downloadable anti-drug banners that can easily be posted on stakeholder Web sites.

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